

The Past Still Lingers by OTTSTF

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

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Summary:

Most of the party experiences nightmares relating to the events they so wish they could forget.

Eleven has a lot more to fear, though, which only allows her nightmares to be a lot worse. Dangers that don't need a gate to another dimension; dangers that could find her at any moment in time.

Thankfully, she's got someone who experiences them with her; who is always ready to go out of his way to aid her.

1. Nightmares

Author's Note:

So here we have my first attempt at a proper series.
Oh *boi* am I scared.

Slowly stepping over the tripwire, El and Mike return to the cabin after spending the day with the rest of the party. The day has been exciting, fun as much as they can remember, and so they're looking forward to spending some time together just watching TV before heading to sleep.

That is until the cabin door opens unannounced. Both of their attention is immediately drawn to it as they reach for each-other's hands instinctively, holding tight.

The door opens to reveal a suited man, who just with his gaze, sends their emotions into a fierce battle between fear and anger.

"Hello, Eleven." the man begins, as two more men, armed with rifles, emerge from behind him, standing to either side. "Haven't you grown? It's such a shame we had to stay apart for so long. But, panic over, I'm here now."

Mike jumps in front of her, holding his arm out as if to protect her.

"You're not taking her anywhere!" he shouts at the man, anger winning the fight inside him.

"Now now, Michael. You're not in much of a position to be making orders." the man states. Mike's eyebrows furrow; he only wishes he possessed the power that El does, so that he could snap the three necks in front of him.

"I understand your anger, child. She's mislead you all this time; made you think she could live a normal life with you." he laughs a little.

"Did you not listen to our warnings, Michael? She's dangerous. Being around her puts you at risk. She will get you killed."

"No!" he shouts back. "She's saved my life three times, you moron! Two of those by fixing the shit you caused!"

He laughs once again. "Me? Oh dear, she truly has mislead you. She was the one to make first contact, child. She allowed the entry of the beasts, not me."

"Under your orders! She had no choice!" Mike feels his anger build as the seconds pass.

"Everybody has a choice, Michael." the man begins. "She followed my orders like the good girl she was, but if she hadn't, none of this would have ever happened. We wouldn't be having this conversation right now. Nobody else would need to die."

"Nobody's going to die except for you!" he barks back.

"Oh? And how do you expect that to happen, child? My dear Eleven would never lay a finger on her Papa."

"You. Are not. My father." El's first words during the ordeal emerge. The man's gaze turn to her as an expression of surprise forms on his face.

"Oh, Eleven. Have they truly blinded you, too?" he frowns as her eyebrows furrow. "I'm sorry, Eleven. But these people... they don't care about you. They want you to be normal; to pretend you're just like them, when in truth, you're nothing like them. You're special, Eleven, and they want you to hide it."

"But I want to be normal!" she responds. "They let me live a normal life! A life where I'm not 'poked and prodded' like a lab rat. A life where I can be who I want to be, not what you make me be!"

"Just leave her alone, you bastard!" Mike snaps.

"No! Michael, you fail to understand. Her purpose in life is to work for us! To keep America safe!" the man snaps back.

"Safe? With you? After you nearly caused the end of the world? Sure, I'll believe that!"

"Mistakes happen, Michael. But look who saved us. With us, she can save so many more." he sounds as if he truly believes the words he's saying.

"Bullshit! You'd just go back to using her exactly like you did. You'll keep her locked up in a tiny cell because all you care about is torturing her!"

"Enough!" the man exclaims. "She is coming home. Neither of you have a say in the matter."

"This is my home! I will never go back with you!" El states.

"Eleven. Don't be a fool. That man... that 'Jim Hopper' kept you here against your will, remember? You wanted to see Michael, but he would not let you."

"He was keeping me safe, from you!" she informs him.

"And look where that got him" He turns to look into the cabin, and nods his head. A flash and loud gunshot emerge from inside the cabin, followed by the sound of a body hitting the floor.

"NO!" El screams, attempting to run for the cabin. The two armed

guards raise their guns at her as Mike holds her back.

"Do you see now, Michael? We were telling you the truth. She is dangerous. You should not be near her, as she will get you killed." he steps backwards slightly, clicking his fingers once. In response, the sights of both rifles find their new target as Mike.

El flicks her head in an attempt to disarm the men, but nothing happens; she immediately feels as if she's going to black out.

"Oh dear, what's the matter, Eleven? Has your anger gotten the better of you?" the man teases.

She glances at him as Mike holds her steady. "Don't... you dare."

"Eleven, we cannot leave loose ends untied. I thought your time with Eight would have taught you that." he pauses as her expression turns to one of surprise. "But, evidently not. Step aside, Eleven. Let us finish what must be done."

"No." she stands in front of Mike, protecting him.

"El, don't!" he grabs her shoulders. "Just run! Don't worry about me, please, just go!"

"No, Mike! I won't let them hurt you!" she responds.

"Ever the brave one, isn't he?" the man comments. "You two. Separate them."

They both try to run, but are quickly caught by the guards, held apart from each-other.

"What makes you think you could protect her, Michael? If the chief of police himself failed her, and your entire family and friends, too, what makes you think you are the difference?"

"As long as I die trying." is all Mike responds with.

The man looks down upon him; impressed by the show of bravery from the boy, before reaching behind himself to pull out a gun of his own, placing it to Mike's chest.

"So be it."

Mike closes his eyes in brace for the incoming pain, whilst El screams as she tries to break free from her captor's grasp. Her efforts are in vein as another gunshot floods their ears. She's stunned for a brief moment, before she's pulled back to reality by the sight of Mike being let go, hitting the floor with a thud. She tries again to use her powers against the man, but once again nothing happens in response.

"Oh, Eleven. If your anger is going to limit your abilities, I'm afraid you'll be of no use to me." the man says, walking up to her as she continues to try to break free. The man places a hand onto her shoulder as she eventually gives up. Her eyes don't leave Mike's body

for a second.

"We need you to always be at full performance. Can you promise that for me, Eleven?"

She doesn't respond, unable to think straight as her eyes begin to flood with tears. He was right. She's put them all in danger, and now Mike, Hopper, maybe everyone else are all dead because of her.

"Eleven." the man urges her for a response.

"Just kill me." she tells him. "I will never work for you. I will never do what you want. If you don't kill me, I'll kill you." she states, gaze still remaining on Mike.

The man sighs. "How unfortunate." before she feels the gun against her own head. She remains unfazed by the threat to her life, as all she can think of is Mike, and that she is to blame.

"El!" she hears a faint voice in the distance, but it doesn't belong to any of the men around her. Finally letting her gaze away from Mike, she looks around to find the source.

"El!" it repeats. She's slowly beginning to realise it sounds awfully a lot like...

"El!" it repeats one last time.

2. Together To The End

Notes for the Chapter:

Bit short but hey-ho, gotta write what my brain lets me. _(ツ)_/

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"El!" it repeats one last time.

Her eyes snap open, and she lunges forward. Flicking her head around to gain her bearings, she finds herself in bed, in her room, in the cabin. Her breathing is erratic, and her hair is glued to her head from the sweat she'd shed from the nightmare. Her gaze finally lands on Mike: Alive, well, in the same state as her. He immediately grabs her into a hug, holding her tight.

"It's okay, El. We're okay, it wasn't real, he's not here." he begins, having shared her dream. "You're fine, I'm fine, Hopper's fine, everyone's fine." Their practise of telepathic communication has led to them sharing their dreams more frequently than not – nightmares included.

She sobs into his shoulder for what feels like a minute before finally speaking.

"I couldn't save you, Mike. I tried... I tried so hard, but I couldn't."

"Hey, hey, it's okay. It was just a nightmare." he tries to reassure her; although he may be trying to reassure himself, also.

"We're having more and more... and he's showing up in so many of them now..." she lifts her head from his shoulder, looking into his eyes. "What if it means something, Mike?"

"It can't, El, it can't. If he were still out there we'd know." His words aren't helping, as she continues to panic.

“How would we know, Mike? I’ve tried looking for him; you were with me when I tried. I couldn’t find him. We don’t know where he is, or whether he’s alive or not. He could be on his way and we wouldn’t know.”

He absent-mindedly began rubbing her shoulders at some point; he’s not entire sure when, but he has no intention of stopping.

“He won’t find this place, El! We’ve always been careful and we still are! But hey, if he did, Hopper wouldn’t give up without a fight, and you’d be able to fight back too. It wouldn’t be like the nightmare – you’re getting stronger, El, not weaker.”

She smiles slightly at his words; she’s not one to brag, but he is right – telekinesis has been getting easier with practise; she doesn’t see a reason for her to suddenly be unable to defend herself. Her smile is short-lived, though.

“What if he comes for you first? Oh god, Mike, if he did anything to you...”

“El, El, listen to me. If he ever does, I want you to run, okay? Don’t worry about me – you keep yourself safe. That’s all that matters to me. Promise me that, please.”

“No, Mike. I won’t promise, because we don’t lie to each-other.” she says seriously. He sighs. “If anything happens to you... I’d lose it, Mike. I would never know when to stop... I’d... I’d probably end up dead myself.”

“No! El, don’t you dare. Whatever happens, whatever you do, keep yourself safe. Please.”

She hesitantly nods her head. She still sometimes finds the love and support from everyone – especially Mike – quite overwhelming. The transition from essential slavery to being treated like royalty by Mike, and now to be treated like a real daughter by Hopper and Mrs. Byers... the thought of it all never fails to put a smile on her face. But now she’s worried. Worried for her family, her friends. *Mike*. If the events of that nightmare were to ever become true...

No. She wouldn’t let it. She’ll watch over each and every one of them, right to her last breath.

“Whatever happens, El. As long as we’re together, and you’re safe, I’m happy.” Mike says. She nods her head.

“Together. To the end.” she says, smiling.

His smile immitates hers. “To the end.” he copies. He snaps his gaze away from her momentarily, noticing the time displayed by the clock. He hums.

“It’s a bit early, but I don’t think I’ll get back to sleep now. Do you want breakfast?” he asks. She simply nods her head.

“Allright, Eggo heaven coming right up.” he says, copying her laugh after it.

3. Us Against The World

As Mike walks out of the bedroom, he finds Hopper situated on the couch with a cup of coffee in his hands, watching whatever that might be on the TV. As he slowly closes the door behind him, Hopper looks over to him.

“Both of you again?” he asks Mike, having become used to their apparent mental linkage.

“Yeah.” Mike mumbles out.

“Same as usual?”

“No...” Mike responds. “This one’s... new. Worse in a way.”

“Oh, *perfect*.” Hopper responds sarcastically. “What’s this one about?”

Mike shrugs, finally tossing two Eggos into the toaster. “Could we wait until El’s out? I’d rather all three of us talk about it together, to be honest.”

Hopper nods his head. “That bad, huh?”

“Yeah, bad.” the answer doesn’t come from Mike, but El, who’s now emerging from her bedroom. Both gazes land onto her.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Hopper asks her. She shrugs slightly, ducking her head slightly.

“It’s okay if you don’t...”

“Brenner.” El cuts Hopper off, and his eyebrows immediately furrow. *That psychopath. Perfect.*

“Found home, found us. He... he k-ki...”

She struggles to talk about it; tears immediately threatening her eyes. Mike’s immediately by her side, taking her hand. She quickly buries her face into his chest; his hands automatically finding their places on her back and the back of her head, the latter rubbing her hair slightly.

"You." she mumbles into his shirt. He looks down to her, although she doesn't move her head from his chest. Despite the use of a single word, Mike understands what she's saying.

"Are you sure?"

She nods her head against his chest, giving him all the confirmation he needs, so following a sigh, he begins.

"We were out. I don't know where we'd been; it started with us walking back here." he pauses, awaiting a response from Hopper, which he receives as a simple nod, prompting him to continue.

"We got here, and there he was, standing in the door, two guys beside him, one inside we think."

"Was I there?" Hopper asks the boy, who nods his head.

"We didn't see you but..." he sighs. "After rambling on, Brenner signalled behind him. Then..."

Hopper nods his head, frowning. "They killed me." he says, stating it as a fact. Mike just nods his head again.

There's a lingering silence between them for a moment. Mike leads El to the sofa, stationing her next to Hopper with him on her other side. Her eyes are red from the tears, which she tries to wipe away.

"I can tell him later if you want me to." Mike says to her, seeing the obvious struggle in her expression. She just shakes her head.

"No, go on. He needs to know."

Giving her a small smile, he nods his head, before turning his gaze back to the chief.

"He went on saying all the bullshit they told us – that she's dangerous and all that crap, before telling the two guys to grab us. She tried to stop them, but whatever she tried just wouldn't work; we don't know why."

"It's a nightmare; they're never realistic." Hopper responds.

"Yeah, I know. Anyway, he wanted to prove it I guess... so..." he

glances to El, who looks to him at the same time as if knowing. Immediately she throws herself back into him with a sob.

“Oh god. You too.” Hopper catches on.”

“Yeah. Split us up, shot me through the heart. The shock of that woke me up, but she was still in the nightmare, so I could still kinda see it.”

“And that’s when you woke her up.” Hopper states again.

Mike nods his head. “I wanted her out of there before they shot her too; he said she wasn’t useful if her abilities weren’t going to work any more.”

“Asshole.” Hopper mumbles out as his eyebrows furrow at the mere thought of the man. Hesitantly, he reaches out, placing a hand onto El’s shoulder. She eventually lifts her head from Mike’s chest, looking to Hopper.

“We won’t let that happen. We’re smart, the three of us. If he is out there, he’ll never find this place. He’ll never find you.” he tells her.

“But what if he goes somewhere else? What if he goes straight for Mike?”

Hopper and Mike instantly glance to each-other. They both sigh, nearly in unison, knowing there’s nothing they can really say to that.

“I want you to do exactly what he told you.”

“No.” she responds.

“El-” Mike tries. She turns to him immediately.

“Mike. Together forever. You agreed.”

He ducks his head with a sigh. “Yeah... I did. I just don’t like thinking of you in danger.”

“And I don’t like thinking of *you* in danger. Any of you.” she switches her glance between them a few times.

“There’s no point in us arguing about this, is there?” Hopper admits, knowing the answer. El shakes her head, he sighs.
“Well I guess that’s it then. Us three against the world.”
Both of them nod their heads with a smile.

Never any different.

Notes for the Chapter:

Writer's block is so fun, **amiright?**

I *think* I have something in mind for how I want this fic to go.

Hopefully that means more chapters more often.

Thanks as always for all the support! <3

Author's Note:

Thanks for reading!

Please leave feedback if you've got the time. Every kudo and comment means the world to me ♥